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AUTHOR Frankel, Alan D.
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ABSTRACT

An interdisciplinary, team approach involving a variety of support services and a joint effort on the part of faculty, admissions personnel, peers, and tutors can be an effective tool for use in reducing the anxiety of adults who are returning to education. Whether they are organized to publicize departmental offerings or to explain the function of various tests, informal gatherings between faculty, admissions personnel, and adult students can help relieve adult students' anxiety resulting from feelings of competition and lack of immediate positive feedback. Other means of helping adult learners include making them active participants in the education process by utilizing a student-centered model of instruction, and offering such support services as coffee hours and peer tutoring programs. A particularly valuable tool for reducing adult student anxiety levels is the integrated course that, by virtue of its interdisciplinary approach, allows for the integration of skills from the following areas: reading development, writing development, effective reasoning, basic philosophy, mathematics, and speech. (The first two papers in this series are available separately--see note.) (MN)

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Structuring An Adult Learning Environment
Part III:
The Team Approach

Alan D. Frankel
Mercy College
Dobbs Ferry, New York

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This paper focuses on how a team approach can be an effective tool in assisting adults who are returning to education. The team is seen as being composed not only of the faculty of instruction, but also of the admission personnel, peers, and tutors. The team approach can be used to reduce the adults' anxiety levels. This paper will show how instructors can not only modify their styles of teaching, but how they can add to their effectiveness by crossing over departmental boundary lines. Finally, the support systems will be described as a vital part of the total team approach.

For adults returning to education after a period of time, one characteristic held in common is a high level of anxiety. Usually, the major contributor to that anxiety is the perception of competition. Whether real or imaginary, the perception takes its toll. The adult is not only in competition with the younger student, but also in competition with a "former self." This self is a self that has been educated to some extent and has forgotten much. There is a heightened awareness that much information has been lost.

The concerns the adult voices find a center in the question "What skills do I have?" Many adults overtly show anxiety as soon as the textbook is introduced. Here the book may symbolize the need for the functioning of the study skills. Many adults request permission to bring a tape recorder to class to get the instructor's every word on tape. Still, others are weighed down by new vocabulary and jargon specific to the field of study. Where does the college begin to acclimate the adult to the walls of the perceived ivory tower, Academia?

Although Stake and Pearsol write from a supervisory capacity, their article "Evaluating Responsively" (1981) suggests that the proper time and place to start is the day the admissions officer meets the adult. Careful listening to the adult's long-term goals will help plan the scholastic career. Often the adult is seen running a long distance marathon because goals are pointed to that end: that somewhere, long down the path, he will find his just reward. It is a marathon race, not a sprint or a 100 yard dash.

Because the goal of a degree which is about four years in the making is so far away, the lack of positive immediate feedback builds anxiety. It is also true that with great ambiguity there is great anxiety; the two are in a direct, proportional relationship. Franz Alexander (1963) has shown this to be true in his therapeutic treatment. Wittrock (1982) defines the source of this anxiety as being from two possible areas: intrinsic and extrinsic. It is the latter source that focuses on how the adult sees self in relation to others and in relation to status. If a student is properly counselled, the student will know what to expect in terms of requirements for courses as well as for degree requirements. This means that "Orientation Day" begins with initial contact.

Part of the team involvement is being aware of departmental offerings. As banal as the idea may be, a successful admissions officer would be aware of any certificates (i.e.: Computer Science, Public Safety) that may be available. It would also be highly appropriate to advise the adult of the possibility of an Associate's Degree. Here, long term goals are shortened and tangible feedback can arrive much sooner.

One successful project the admissions officer can initiate is an informal meeting before the actual admissions test. Many adults returning to education have great difficulty in coping with the idea of placement tests. Many view it as a competitive, ego-threatening self-appraisal. The source of the competitiveness is two-fold. First, the mere fact that the adult has been away from academia suggests that his/her vocabulary, although once broader, has now dwindled down to words used on a daily basis or words which reflect a specialized use according to the adult's line of employment. Secondly, as previously mentioned, there is the perception of competition from peers.

In solving this problem, there are some relatively easy approaches. Future research should question whether or not it is best to have adults take group design admission tests in a group that does not mix the adult with the younger freshmen. Another source of future study would possibly concern the challenge of skill regression due to lack of exercise. It might be hypothesized that skill regression and/or the challenge of age could be controlled as factors that influence adults.

Another solution introduces the team approach. A "coffee hour" can be held in which the faculty can attend to speak to the adults. The faculty could sensitize the adults to the idea that placement tests are guides for establishing which skills need to be improved. The question of pass or fail does not really apply. It may be that if a department of adult education exists within the college, the attending faculty would be the adults' instructors. This informal meeting would help ease the adults' anxiety about

who or what college instructors are like.

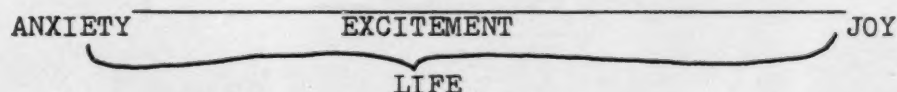
Travers (1979) suggests that the teacher may be seen as a performing artist. He takes a reductionist point of view that views teaching as a succession of competencies. In terms of a "coffee hour," the instructor is given a new means of viewing his "audience" in order to know how to better "play towards them."

This serves as a transition for this paper to shift focus towards the instructor's team participation in reducing anxiety. All too often, courses are seen as being separate and disjunct. Skills are not transferred from one area, such as reading and writing, to another, such as history or psychology. This may be a function of departmentalization. Reading may be the purview of an education or skills development class. Writing is usually seen as the domain of the English Department. But history and science instruction require students to have the tools of communication functioning at a high level. Adults have expressed anxiety in content area courses when these skills are not at a satisfactory level. What can be done? How can the team approach answer these needs?

Regardless of the department the faculty member is in, the team approach uses skills that are universal in their approach. First it is best to identify the anxiety and deal with that problem. The Hull-Spence learning theory (1943; 1951) postulated that some level of anxiety was highly appropriate because it served as a motivator in the sense of an arousal state. Behavior would become too variable and unreliable if the anxiety level was high because great effort would be expended on reducing the

unpleasant state. If, however, the anxiety was minimized but maintained at a low pitch, a small amount of arousal would aid in the performance. It is analogous to a spurt of adrenalin getting the heart to pump faster in a situation of perceived danger.

Koestenbaum (1978) takes a positive view of anxiety in an existential stance. He claims that it is the "concrete experience of living" (p.234). He further describes it almost as a joie de vivre or as a receptiveness to reality. Graphically, he shows it as



Secondly, he redefines anxiety as a motivation to meaning and as the impetus for this quest for meaning.

Educating the returning adults to focus their anxiety to a positive end is further supported by Spense, Farber, and McFann (1956). Using paired-associates as subjects, they demonstrated that high-anxiety subjects were able to learn simple tasks, but not difficult ones. Conversely, low anxiety students were better able to perform difficult tasks than simple ones. More recently, Feldhusen, Denny, and Condon (1965) found that there were significant negative relationships between anxiety and convergent thinking as measured on the School and College Achievement Test and on the Sequential Test of Educational Progress.

Both the adult learner and the instructor may utilize this knowledge in the classroom. This presents an alternative style of teaching and curriculum design. It is one in which anxiety may be reduced by the student and the instructor sharing together the responsibility for structuring the course.

"Five Processes of Teaching" are detailed by Joyce and Harootunian (1967) in which one can see the combining of energies resulting in a creative learning environment.

1) Making and Using Knowledge

Knowledge is seen as methods and concepts of organizing life's experiences. The teacher does not give data alone, but gives data for the purpose of generalizing and inquiring.

2) Shaping the School

The teacher is the developer of strategies to identify critical educational problems and to make decisions towards solving them. This includes the development of behavioral objectives that will define when learning has taken place.

3) Teaching with Strategy

Communication and teaching is seen as varied among many styles that are both uniquely effective as well as collectively effective. This means that appropriate methods and materials are tried, renewed, and altered when necessary.

4) Creating Interpersonal Climates

Here the teacher works in and out of many groups and roles. There is a variance of behavior when working with students, colleagues, and administration. Furthermore, it implies a self-awareness to be able to stimulate leadership and cooperation.

5) Controlling a Teaching Personality

The self-awareness is continued as personal values and beliefs get challenged as students try to experiment with standards and authority.

This model allows for the introduction of the adult learner as active participant in the education process. Cuban (1980) writes about the history of the teacher-centered model which is a stricter form of the above. The dichotomy is between the teacher-centered model and the student-centered model of instruction. In this dichotomy one can see how the latter approach gives a greater share of the responsibility and authority for learning to the adult.

Teacher-Centered

1. Instructor presents advanced organizers (Ausubel 1969)
2. Instructor presents new vocabulary
3. Instructor presents utility of data as applies to research or field of study
4. Instructor relates to previously taught data
5. Instructor supplies basis for contrast/ comparison of theories

Student-Centered

1. Students set own goals or purpose for reading using PQRS or SQ3R type techniques (Robinson 1962)
2. Student compiles own list of 'need to know' words as a function of individualized needs (Stauffer 1970)
3. Integration of material via experience approach; student tests worthiness or fit of new information
4. Student establishes bond with previously taught material
5. Student establishes own meaningful dichotomies

This framework for comparison closely follows the theories of Russell Stauffer. Although his material is geared towards educating elementary school students, adaptation of many of his approaches can be made for adults. The focus is on incorporating the adult into the learning experience.

When a structure for learning is provided, the student has a home base to return to when ambiguity starts to rise. The idea of bringing the returning adult to a position of active, self-directed learner not only gives greater responsibility to the student, but reminds the instructor that the student has the right to expect a certain amount of respect. This is what Malcolm Knowles refers to when he writes about the principle of andragogy.

To be adult means to be self-directing. There develops in the human being a deep psychological need to be perceived by himself and by others as being indeed self-directing. This is the concept that lies at the basis of Andragogy. Andragogy is based upon the insight that the deepest need an adult has is to be treated as an adult, to be

treated as a self-directing person, to be treated with respect. Andragogy is student-centered and problem orientated. (1970)

How does the instructor's style of teaching incorporate these ideas? How can anxiety be reduced by presenting the tasks to be accomplished in the content course? How does one structure an adult learning environment?

One does not structure an adult learning environment; many structure it together. Having given the example of how the admissions office can focus the entering anxiety, and then having shown that student-centered versus teacher-centered instruction may be an optional approach to the instructor, it should be apparant that structuring the adult learning environment is a team effort. Thus, these ideas are incorporated as an approach philosophy. The anxiety gets reduced when the "rules of the game" are not only explained and reinforced by the cooperating faculty, but when they are jointly commissioned by the faculty and adult learner. Jahn (1979) substantiates this conclusion as he describes Heinrich Schliemann, a self-directed learner who gained facility of eighteen languages.

Still, an important member of the total team approach has been left out: the support service. At the "coffee hour" suggested earlier there should also be an introduction of the peer, tutor, and Big Brother/Big Sister. According to Carl Rogers (1961), anxiety may arise from the perception of being alienated. If the adult is made to see that he or she is not unique in this situation and is not alone, and that others have gone through the same trials and tribulations, anxiety will be greatly reduced. Blustein (1981) uses this model as he describes his introduction of a Big Brother/Big Sister program at a four-year college. He views the counselor as being successful when applying

these Rogerian techniques.

Although both instructor and tutor convey information from the content area of study, there is obviously a great difference between their actions. Using Joyce and Harootunian's five process model, both the second and third steps are inapplicable to the tutor. Steps one, four, and five apply to both and ostensibly the student is seen as the recipient. A closer look examines the disparities.

The adult learner will often take the passive role in learning and view the instructor as the disseminator of facts, as the possessor of wisdom to be shared. The content is new and often unclear even after having some familiarity with the material by having read a chapter or two in the textbook. The tutor does not hold the same position in the eyes of the adult learner.

The tutor is seen differently and is not necessarily regarded as professional. The tutor is most often seen as one who has undergone the same trials and tribulations and has gained some degree of mastery. Often, this is the basis of selection of the tutor or Big Brother/Big Sister. The tutor is seen as the positive role model that the adult can also emulate. It is almost as if the tutor was selected to read the line "If I can do it, you can do it too!" Perhaps future research might attempt to assess the adult learners' affective response to the tutor. It is interesting that the tutor qualifies as a para-professional in terms of Baird's description of a generalist (1973).

The generalist approach is concerned with helping students apply the ideas and facts of the field in their lives and helping them gain insights into current problems. The generalist teacher tries to help students consider their values and broaden their view of life. (p.16)

The tutor's job is often one of clarifying and re-interpreting already presented material. This means that some familiarity, albeit usually without understanding, exists. The terms to be learned have already been exposed and the tutor has to re-interpret for the student or must identify the obstacle that doesn't allow comprehension and use of the material.

It is important that it be highlighted here that the tutor is not teaching. Teaching has already taken place. The tutor is addressing a singular need and is re-clarifying and rephrasing. This talent, separate and distinct from teaching, also greatly reduces ambiguity and, hence, anxiety.

Again, the support services are just one part of the team, but their function is different. They cannot make the same demands as the instructor does, but often the tutor sees what the adult learner may need is more and varied exercises, additional homework.

Weekly meetings of all the members of the team will allow for that insight to arise. It has been my experience that from these exchanges seven assumptions about the adult learning process have arisen.

- 1) Pupils vary in the amount of time and practice needed to accomplish a given task, but outside pressures of work and family life often put restraints upon the availability of time. This means that teachers could provide tutors with extension exercises to make tutorial sessions fuller in value. Yet it also means that the tutor must return to the teacher with even more information so that these extension exercises may be acknowledged as a part of the class requirements.
- 2) From this acknowledgement the adult learner can realize that individual needs can be met. The student can be working at his own pace with enough time to take the practice that is necessary before advancement to the next level.

- 3) Instructor involvement in a tutorial program can alternate between direct and indirect intervention. A successful tutor requires little teacher intervention, but the presence of the instructor adds further credulity to the worthiness of the session.
- 4) Because the adult is in a group learning experience, it is often appropriate to check the individual's mastery of a unit before advancement. When tutoring is necessary, it is understood that both the tutor and the adult learner will attempt to bridge any gap, but that some extra time may be required.
- 5) All members of the team may assist while the gap is being filled. A constant evaluation of the progress of the student is able to provide the adult learner with positive feedback.
- 6) The instructor is most effective when teaching is not limited to the classroom. The adult learner has a dearth of experiences which may be tapped as a resource. Often these experiences can be shared and add extra meaningfulness to the learning process.
- 7) The student is a product of andragogy and is to be encouraged as an active learner. Responsibility is not seen as a burden, but as a tool for managing a course of study. If the "community" is built upon, the adult learner can be seen as being very supportive of other members of the class.

Now that the team has been assembled and given job descriptions, once can more fully appreciate an interdisciplinary approach where skills can be integrated. As previously stated, adult learners are often faced with the problem of relating skills or seeing a unity of knowledge. When there is a reinforcement of methods, vocabularies, and allusion to topics discussed in other classes, the circle is completed. The adult learner can see the value to some of the courses as well as direct positive feedback in terms of the utility of information. The team is effective because they are working together; they have approached the philosophy of educating adults with an additional aspect of practicality of goal setting, anxiety reduction, and usefulness of skills.

A SAMPLE INTEGRATED COURSE

PSYCHOLOGY 100: CRITICAL READINGS IN PSYCHOLOGY

TEXT: Annual Editions in Psychology 1981/1982
 Sluice Dock, Guilford Ct.: The Dushkin Publishing Co.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1 - To introduce the student to the topics of the study of psychology
- 2 - To introduce the student to the vocabulary of psychology
- 3 - To enable the student to read effectively the articles contained in the text so as to be able to not only produce the main idea, but so that supporting detail, examples, and illustrations may be located and combined to form a complete understanding
- 4 - To enable the student to discuss, debate, and compare theories presented by the articles in a cohesive manner
- 5 - To provide the student with a framework for relating written observations and theories to his/her individual life so as to integrate the material and add meaningfulness
- 6 - To improve and extend the student's skills in terms of reading, writing, and study habits
- 7 - To relate the process of learning and content of learning to other courses taken concurrently

INTEGRATION WITH READING DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

- 1 - Reading for main idea
- 2 - Reading for detail
- 3 - Identification of paragraph patterns
- 4 - Finding transitional phrases that indicate new topics
- 5 - Outlining
- 6 - Study via PQRS or SQ3R systems
- 7 - Reading charts and graphs
- 8 - Utilization of new vocabulary

INTEGRATION WITH WRITING DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

- 1 - Identification of introductory sentences
- 2 - Identification of transitional phrases
- 3 - Paraphrasing the paragraph
- 4 - Outlining
- 5 - Writing summaries and critiques
- 6 - Writing the comparative essay
- 7 - Writing sentences using new vocabulary
- 8 - Differentiating between expository and journalistic writing

INTEGRATION WITH BASIC PHILOSOPHY CLASS IN EFFECTIVE REASONING

- 1 - To be able to use a syllogism
- 2 - To be able to apply deductive reasoning
- 3 - To be able to apply inductive reasoning
- 4 - To be able to decipher an algorithm

INTEGRATION WITH MATHEMATIC SKILLS

- 1 - Decoding charts and graphs
- 2 - Using mean, median, mode, standard deviation
- 3 - Using descriptive statistics
- 4 - To discriminate between quantitative and qualitative analysis
- 5 - To be able to use numbers in an uncumbersome manner when debating or defending a position

INTEGRATION WITH SPEECH SKILLS

- 1 - To enhance listening skills
- 2 - To develop the ability to present a position, debate, or idea before the class
- 3 - To be able to argue persuasively by using fact rather than visceral responses
- 4 - To be able to locate statements that are editorials or "propaganda"

INTEGRATION WITH BASIC PHILOSOPHY CLASS IN EFFECTIVE REASONING

- 1 - To be able to use a syllogism
- 2 - To be able to apply deductive reasoning
- 3 - To be able to apply inductive reasoning
- 4 - To be able to decipher an algorithm

TOPICS THAT RELATE TO VARIOUS COURSES

Psychobiology, Topics in Human Biology
Human Sexuality Topics in Genetics

Descriptive Statistics Introduction to College Algebra

Behavior Modification,
Social Psychology Introduction to Sociology

The History of Psychology..Philosophy
..History courses

Psychology of Organization.Business Management

Self-Concept Career and Life Planning
 ..Dramatic Arts

Individual Differences/IQ..Education courses

Language Development Education courses in reading

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